

along the north into Assam and Manipur. On the eastern side the southernmost record is the one from Puri referred to above while Inglis quotes a few records from much further north in the Madhubani Sub-Division of Darbhanga District in Tirhut (JBNHS 16 p. 342). The present records are from over 200 miles southwards, but Mrs. Palit was informed that they have been seen here over the last few years only. They are locally known as Siberian duck and often caught at night in

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nets laid for fish.

In her last letter Mrs. Palit said one was obtained on 13th March, "when only about 100 birds were left, and all had gone by 20th March".

In the absence of earlier records it would appear that they have started visiting this area in fairly recent years and it would be interesting to try and determine to what factor this change in migratory limits further southwards can be attributed.

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8. WINTER FOOD OF SPOTTED OWLET, *ATHENE BRAMA INDICA*

A group of six Spotted owlets, *Athene brama indica* which roosted on a *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* very close to our laboratory, were regularly observed to study their social behaviour. We also analysed their faecal pellets during winter to study their food. The identifiable contents were sorted from the faecal pellets and analysed by gravimetric method (Table 1) following Southern (1969).

It is observed that during the month of December about 60 per cent of their food was composed of various types of insects but during January their food consisted pre-dominantly of rodents (60.2%). The mandibles which were found intact in the faecal pellets were identified to be mostly of the Field mouse, *Mus* sp. *Eucalyptus* seeds, small pebbles and lime particles also occurred in the faecal pellets. Apparently they are taken for assisting in the grinding of food.

In the Central Research Farm of the Institute (about 400 hectares) the rodent population is constituted mostly by *Tatera indica* (43.8%), *Meriones hurrianae* (28.9%), *Ger-*

billus nanus indus (24.0%) but other rodents also occur in low numbers: *G. gladowi*

TABLE 1
PER CENT OCCURRENCE OF VARIOUS UNDIGESTED ITEMS
IN THE FAECAL PELLETS OF *Athene brama indica*

Items	1st week of December	Last week of January	Ave. winter food
INSECTS	59.79	34.15	46.7
Hemiptera	4.68	2.43	3.5
Hymenoptera	0.85	1.62	1.2
Coleoptera			
Carabidae	1.71	3.25	2.5
Scarabaeidae	23.50	0.81	12.0
Tenebrionidae	18.80	14.63	16.7
Misc. unid. insects	10.25	11.41	10.8
RODENTS	28.19	60.22	44.2
Jaws, bones of			
Rodents	9.40	18.76	14.1
Fur	0.85	0.81	0.8
Semi-digested material	17.94	40.65	29.3
PLANT MATTER			
<i>Eucalyptus</i> seeds	1.28	0.81	1.0
PEBBLES	11.96	4.06	8.0

(0.82%), *Funambulus pennanti* (0.82%), *Rattus melstada pallidior* (0.82%), *Mus* sp. (0.82%) and *Golunda ellioti* (present) (Prakash and Rana 1970). It is, therefore, surprising to observe that though the occurrence of *Mus* sp. is minimum in the natural environment, yet the presence of this species in the faecal pellets of owlets is maximum. This observation suggests three points worthy of consideration. 1. It is quite possible that the Spotted owl is unable to handle and capture the larger nocturnal gerbil, *Tatera indica* (100 g body weight) and, therefore, it is not preyed upon, 2. The Spotted owl is a selective feeder and picks up only *Mus* spp. though they are not very common, 3. It's in-efficiency to capture the typical desert rodents like *Gerbillus gleadowi* and *Gerbillus nanus* which are nocturnal as well as of the 10 to 20 g. body weight, is because of the specialised adaptation

possessed by these rodents pertaining to hypertrophy of tympanic bullae due to which these small mammals can perceive and discriminate between the wing beats of predatory as well as non-predatory birds (Prakash 1959). As such the typical desert rodents are able to escape from owlets' attacks, but *Mus* spp. fall an easy prey to them.

There could be still another reason of Spotted owlets shifting their food from insects to rodents. Their breeding season at Jodhpur starts in February and to prepare for reproduction they switch over to more nutritive and high protein rodent food.

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9. OCCURRENCE OF NORTHERN JUNGLE MYNA *ACRIDOTHERES FUSCUS* WAGLER IN THE PUNJAB AND HARYANA

The nominate race of the Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus* has been accepted as occurring over most of northern India, excluding the desertified areas. There do not appear to be any specific records from the Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana districts, and it is

also omitted from the Checklist of the Birds of Delhi, Agra and Bharatpur.

It may, therefore, be worth recording that since August 1979, we have seen this bird at the following seven places:

- (i) Bias Pind (district Jullundur); (ii)